

Vandalism causes academic wing closure

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Students wandered the academic wing aimlessly during lunch. They went back to class halfway through their lunch, went to their lockers, sat up by the language classes, or just hung out in the spine.

Technically, that was against the rules, but there was no one enforcing the rules, so students got away with it. Now, administrators guard each door into the academic wing and the stairwells so that no one goes in without needing to.

Students are not supposed to go back to class until five minutes before their class starts again. There are some exceptions to this rule, like if students are going to their lockers to get books or lunches, if they are getting their instruments to take to the music halls, or going to take a test with another teacher. Principal Rob Willman said that the staff is just trying to limit the number of people going back there.

“What we try to avoid is letting people go back in groups of like five or 10, because that’s what was

happening. People were going back and just hanging out, when in fact they can easily just do that in the spine area,” said Willman.

School is not the cleanest place, as students are messy and just figure the custodians will pick up after them, or just do not care about making a mess. Students were making messes in and vandalizing the bathrooms.

“There was some damage to the restrooms, people were bringing apples and smashing them up against the walls, people were putting paper towels down the commodes, we had a mirror taken off the wall, we’ve had damage to the soap dispensers before, and there’s been a lot of noise,” said Willman. “There’s going to be noise when kids come back from lunch, but there’s really no reason to be coming back from lunch more than five minutes early.”

There were other problems with the academic wing bathrooms, such as juuling. This is a big problem in schools now, and the

bathrooms have become a place to hide it.

“They’re [enforcing this plan] to keep students out of the bathrooms, where maybe they’re not able to be monitored like who comes in and comes out...because vaping has been such a big issue as of late,” said Spanish teacher Lillian Conway.

The rule has technically always been there. Students are supposed to wait until five minutes before class starts again to go back. Administrators just never enforced it, so students went wherever and there did not seem to be a problem with it.

“The plan is just to close the doors. The policy has always been there. You are not supposed to leave the cafeteria and spine area until five minutes before your class starts,” said counselor Mark Clark.

Students are allowed to go to lockers before leaving the academic wing for lunch. They can also go in to get lunch boxes, textbooks, or instruments if they really need it. Otherwise, students are supposed to wait until five minutes before class starts again.

“My understanding is once you leave class and go to lunch, you are supposed to go to the lunchroom or the spine, and technically you’re

not supposed to go back to class until two minutes before you’re supposed to be in class,” said student resource officer Robbie Woodruff.

Woodruff, along with several of the administrators, said that they let students back up to five minutes before class starts. While most administrators said that they allow students to be back up to five minutes before class, all of the administrators’ variations of the rules seem to be a little jumbled, according to students.

“Each administrator guarding a door enforces it differently, so it’s hard to know for sure

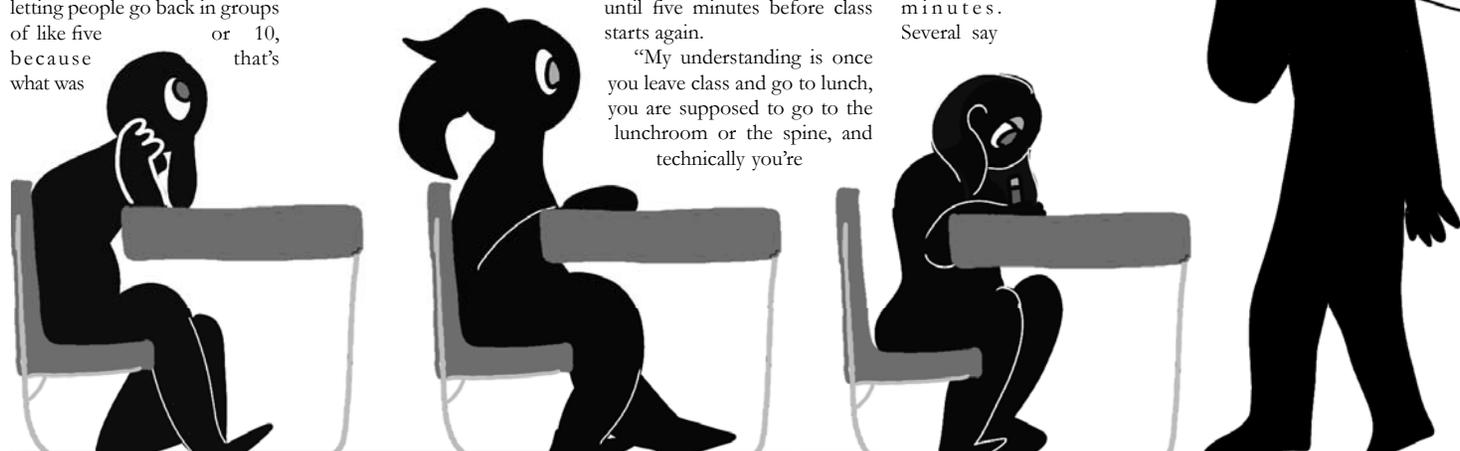
the details [of the rules],” said junior Ainsley Tabor.

Most administrators say that students can go back five minutes before, and some say two to five minutes. Several say

students cannot go back to their lockers until they are allowed back into the wing for class, and others say students can go back for certain items.

Five minutes might also not be enough time to go to lockers and get back to class on time.

“Most of my friends are usually late to class because they have to take things out of their locker and put stuff in during passing period, and that takes time away from actually getting to class,” said freshman Lauren Edwards. “They’re really annoyed by it.”



Other students complain of time problems, too.

"[The rule] messes up some of our routines. Some of my friends need to go to their lockers for their afternoon classes," said Polston.

Some teachers are strict about making sure that everyone is in class on time. Tabor's fourth-period teacher is especially hard on the class.

"I hate the plan. I have first lunch so my fourth-period teacher is very strict about being back to class on time to the minute. I'm not kidding," said

Tabor. "Coming from another class period and only being allowed two minutes to change out my books at my locker in the C Wing then running back to the A Wing is simply absurd."

For Conway, her students now need to go to their lockers and to the bathroom during her class period, since they are not allowed to go in the academic wing during lunch.

"As far as my fourth period class, I have a lot more kids who, when they come up, and it's a couple minutes before we're supposed to resume class, they're asking me to go to the bathroom, they're asking me to go to their locker, because they weren't allowed to. Either way, they want to go to their locker during their lunch time," said Conway. "I don't really like it in regard to that aspect, just because that's something, like we always tell our kids 'you need to take care of that business during lunch,' but they're more limited now."

Not everyone is against this enforcement,

Some students don't mind it.

"Personally, I don't care, because everybody was trashing the academic wing and now it's not, like, disgusting and covered in food and junk. [The plan was put in place] to stop custodians from being disrespected by having to clean up 24/7," said junior Michaela Campbell. "I mean, it's their job to clean up after us, but at the same time, we shouldn't trash the place."

Most students understand the reason for guarding the academic wing doors, but do not agree with it. Some feel as if it is a punishment, or not completely fair.

Edwards said that she thinks the plan was put in place to keep misbehaving students out of the academic wing during fourth period.

"On one hand I can get the people who were acting up and not doing what they were supposed to in the hallways, it keeps them out, but it also keeps

the [other] people, who actually need to go in there, out as well," said Edwards.

Contrary to some students' feelings, the plan was not put in place to give students a consequence.

"This is not meant to be a punishment. Most students would not purposefully disrupt classes, but when students are walking down the hall, they aren't thinking about what's going on in each individual classroom and the importance of what's going on," said math teacher Melissa Neal. "They're in their own little world and they're disrupting learning without realizing that they're doing it. So if we just don't let them in the hallways, the problem shouldn't exist."

For now, the plan has a few things to work out, like everyone understanding the rules each administrator uses. Students have opinions that seem to be overlooked or ignored, and some even have ideas about how to improve this rule.

"Just follow the policy, and be patient with everyone as we work through this," said Clark. "Hopefully it'll work out in the best way for everyone."

Q&A with Spanish teacher Lillian Conway

Bagpiper: Were you or any other teachers involved in this plan?

Lillian Conway: "I was not involved [in deciding to close off the academic wing], any kind of decision like this would go towards like a building-based steering committee usually -- I'm not on that committee -- and then they usually bring these issues up and talk about them with administration."

BP: What is your opinion on the academic wing plan?

LC: "My opinion [is] it's not unreasonable what they're doing...I feel like already having that freedom, and now it's being taken away, there's some concern, understandably, but it's not an unreasonable thing to do. I just think we have to work out the kinks a little better."

